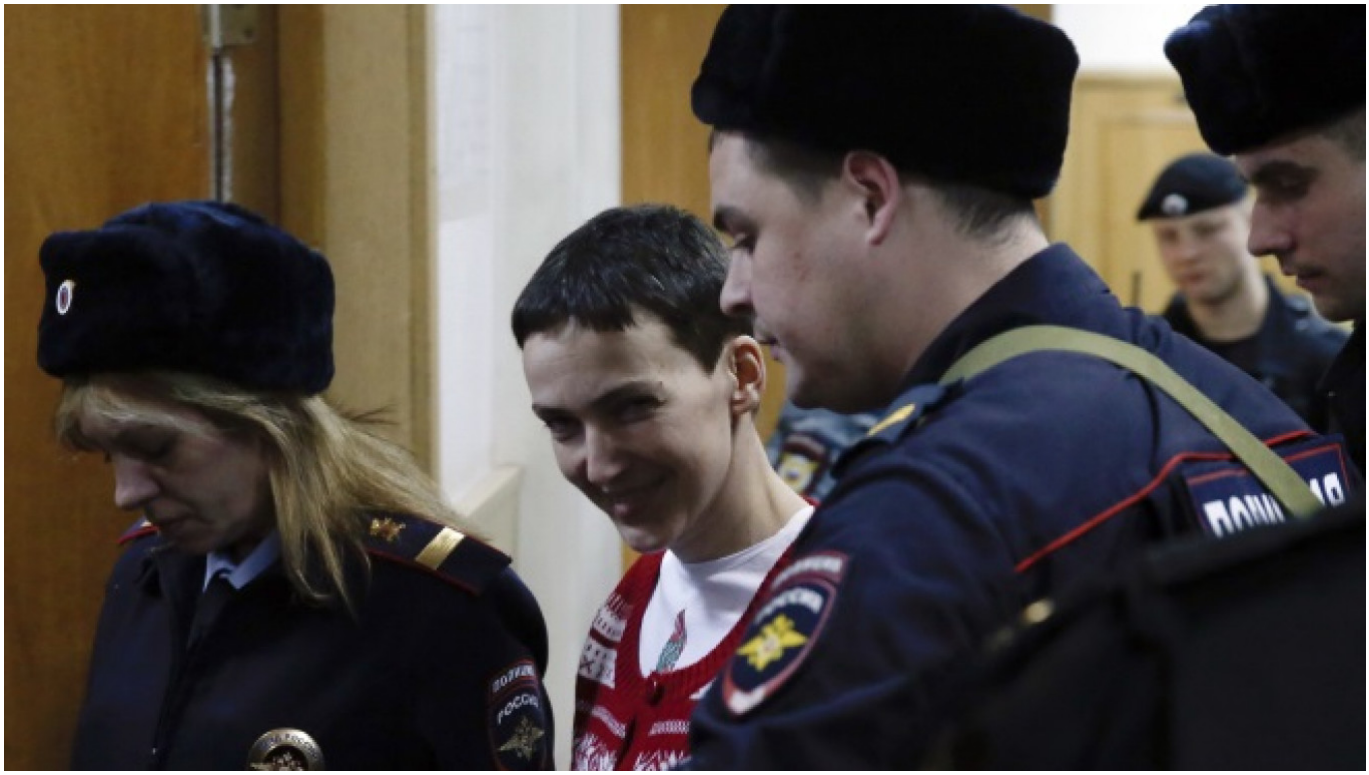
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30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Justice Ministry Says Military Pilot Savchenko Could Be Extradited to Ukraine

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The pilot faces 25 years in jail if found guilty.

Ukrainian military pilot Nadezhda Savchenko, who is currently standing trial in Russia for her alleged complicity in the killing of two Russian journalists in east Ukraine and crossing into Russia illegally, could be extradited back to Ukraine after her sentence comes into force, the RIA Novosti state-run news agency reported, citing Justice Ministry representatives.

Savchenko will have to apply for extradition to Russian or Ukrainian authorities, ministry officials explained, and Ukrainian authorities will have to comply with the Russian court's verdict.

The pilot faces 25 years in jail if found guilty. She denies any wrongdoing, saying she was spirited into Russia by the rebels after being captured in a daylong battle in June 2014.

The 34-year-old's plight and defiant stance in captivity have made her a national hero

in Ukraine, where she is considered a political prisoner. Many human rights groups have repeatedly called on Moscow to free her. Moscow says it is up to the court to decide her fate.

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